

Housing Select Committee		
Title	Rehousing the homeless: charity groups	
Contributors	Executive Director for Customer Services, Head of Law	Item: 6
Class	Part 1	9 March 2016

1 Summary

- 1.1 At its meeting on 26 January, Committee agreed to review the help that could potentially be made available to homeless families by charity groups. Officers have liaised with both CAYSH and Shelter in order to enable Committee to review this issue. Shelter has provided a written submission, which is set out in section 4, and CAYSH will attend to provide a presentation on the night of the Committee meeting.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 Committee is recommended to note the contents of this report, and that a further presentation will be made on the night of the committee.

3 Background

- 3.1 At its meeting on 26 January Committee agreed to review the help that could potentially be made available to homeless families by charity groups. In particular this was intended to look at whether charities could facilitate the housing of homeless families with other families who have spare bedrooms, in a similar manner to the current support made available through, for example CAYSH, for single homeless cases.
- 3.2 Hosting or lodging schemes that accommodate households in owner-occupier spare rooms take considerable resources to develop and sustain. Schemes require substantial advertising in order to recruit households, households must then receive extensive training and provided on-going support to sustain placements and manage risk and incidents. It is uncertain how many households in Lewisham would be willing and able to accommodate families in their homes. Staffing of hosting schemes is only financially viable if a number of households are recruited, trained and supported. Family placements in host household accommodation could only be used on short term basis as lodging arrangements would not provide families with security of tenure.
- 3.3 Officers have liaised with both CAYSH and Shelter in order to enable Committee to review this issue. Shelter has provided a written submission, which is set out below, and CAYSH will attend to provide a presentation on the night of the Committee meeting.

4 Submission from Shelter

4.1 Shelter proposes that Committee should be aware of the following issues and problems which, in its view, would result from an initiative to house homeless families with other currently housed families:

- The proposal would mean that families with children would be sharing facilities with other households, specifically kitchen and bathroom facilities. This may be a suitable option for emergency accommodation for a short period of time (for example, the 6 week limit on private shared accommodation); or perhaps for single people or couples without children, but it is unsuitable as a long term option for families. Although some families may prefer this option to being sent out of area, it shouldn't be seen as a solution to re-housing beyond the emergency period.
- If this was offered as a medium to long-term option then security of tenure would be threatened, as the eviction notice would only need to be 28 days for a lodger with a live-in landlord.
- Another key concern with this proposal is the risk of overcrowding. It is very unlikely that significant numbers of Lewisham residents will have 2 or more spare rooms available, that are of a good size. It is more likely that 1 spare room will be available, which would be unsuitable for a family with children as it would lead to overcrowding.
- Safeguarding is also a concern, especially where children are being re-housed in accommodation shared with an owner.
- The new laws governing Right to Rent must also be considered here. There are implications for landlords taking in lodgers, and the checks will require time and an understanding of the correct documentation and processes required. Landlords and letting agents are expected to have a strong understanding of this, so anyone taking in a lodger will need to be brought up to speed.
- The impact of taking in a lodger on a person's welfare benefits would also need to be considered to make sure that this didn't lead to a loss of income or the repercussions of overpayment (for example, on Housing Benefit).

5 CAYSH

5.1 CAYSH is an independent charity based in south London that specialises in support and accommodation services for single young homeless people. CAYSH currently provide emergency lodgings placements for up to 3 months for young homeless people between the ages of 16 and 21 in Lewisham as part of the South East London Emergency Lodgings Accommodation Network (ELAN). There are currently 4 host households in Lewisham accommodating young people from across the sub-region. Representatives of CAYSH will attend Committee to brief members on their work and to discuss the potential for housing homeless families with other families.

6 Background documents and originator

6.1 There are no background documents to this report.

6.2 If you would like any further information on this report please contact Jeff Endean on 020 8314 6213